



Lessons from the Bay

Part 4: Project Recognition

Project recognition can be very beneficial to students. First, it can inform the rest of the school or the wider community that the project is meaningful and important beyond the classroom walls. Second, it can reward the students directly for their work by giving official praise, thanks, or even a monetary award to them for what they have accomplished. Both types of recognition can help to motivate students and can attract more volunteers and other support for further watershed projects.

Goals

- To motivate students to continue their work on environmental projects
- To attract more student and adult volunteers for future environmental projects
- To gain monetary and in-kind support for further student environmental projects

Materials

Materials are dependent on the type of promotion selected by the students. Potential tools for promotion include the following:

- Video camera and player
- Camera
- Pencil and paper
- Computers with word processing, desktop publishing, and/or Web design software
- Internet access
- Bulletin board
- Supplies for preparing bulletin board items
- Telephone access
- Postage

Directions

*During the instructional planning stages, the teacher may wish to read the pages of this **Project Action Guide** that deal with promoting the project (pp. 65–75). Additionally, the teacher may wish to*

*read **About the Watershed: Instructional Framework**, especially parts VI and VII.*

Obtaining project recognition through promotion

Making a promotion plan requires answers to three basic questions:

- *What do you want to say?*
- *To whom do you want to say it?*
- *What do you want your audience to do as a result?*

There are many ways to promote a project. Having students brainstorm answers to the three questions above can help them decide which method to use in getting the word out about their watershed project. As a result of class discussion, students should pick one (or several) of the following methods to communicate the message to their target audience:

- *Tell people about the project.* Also called *word-of-mouth* or *one-on-one communication*, this method is cost-free, but the message may not reach as many people as desired.
- *Put information in the local newspaper.* This method reaches lots of people. “Preparing a Press Release” (p. 73) explains how to prepare a message for the newspaper. Newspapers publish press releases, articles, and letters to the editor at no charge. Advertisements generally require payment. If the newspaper wants to write about the students’ project, a reporter may make an appointment and interview the teacher or the class. Students should prepare answers to the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* questions before the reporter comes. If a reporter will be visiting the school, tell the principal. The principal may wish to speak to the reporter and will probably also want to approve in advance any written information to be given to the reporter.
- *Remember the school newspaper and school newsletters.* If the project will last several months, one of the workgroups could write a regular column to keep readers informed.

- *Use the school public announcement system.* This method helps get the message to the entire school.
- *Put the message on videotape.* This can be an exciting project, but if lots of people are to see your message, there must be a plan for showing it. Keep video messages short, and make sure they answer the *who, what, when, where, and why* questions. Think about what meetings the intended audience might attend. For example, if your message is mainly for parents, perhaps the class could show the video at a PTA meeting.
- *Go on television or radio.* Local stations usually want local news. Use students' telephone skills to make arrangements. Be prepared with the answers to the *who, what, when, where, and why* questions before a television or radio interview. For television, take along a good picture or some interesting objects related to the project.
- *Publish information.* See "Writing Publications to Promote a Project" (p. 67) for some tips on publishing articles, brochures, and other promotional items.
- *Post the message.* Many schools, offices, businesses, and stores have bulletin boards. Make the message short, neat, and attractive. Post it on bulletin boards that the intended audience is likely to see. Use colors and artwork that will make the message stand out. Have students ask permission before posting anything and arrange to remove notices at an agreed upon time.
- *Use the Internet.* Most schools have a Web site. Post a page there with the project information.
- *Inform people by direct mail.* If there is a list of the names and addresses of the people who need to receive the message, send them a letter. See "Writing Business Letters" (p. 59) for directions.

Whatever communication methods the group decides to use, remember that most people need to hear something several times before they decide to act. Get the word out several ways and several times so people will be sure to hear the message.

Obtaining project recognition through awards and contests

Are the students proud of their project? Might knowing about this project help or inspire others to

do more or better environmental projects? If so, consider entering a competition or applying for an award. People want to hear about meaningful student projects. Share the program and help others to share theirs.

Most awards programs and contests have special forms, deadlines, and requirements. They require that applicants follow the instructions *exactly*. Selection committees seldom consider applications that fail to follow all the guidelines. Awards programs often change from year to year, so ask for current information. Also ask local offices of environmental organizations, litter control programs, and soil and water conservation districts if they know of any awards for which the project might be eligible.

Every award program is different. Winners may receive a certificate, a trip, a picture in the newspaper, a plaque, or a gift. Awards may honor a class, a student, a school, a teacher, or a group.

Create a new award or contest.

Maybe a student group likes the idea of awards or contests, but cannot find one that is just right for them. Perhaps they see excellent environmental activities around them, but nobody is noticing. Students should consider designing their own awards program. They could sponsor an environmental awards assembly for the school or for their grade. Perhaps local businesses would donate prizes. Maybe the local newspaper or television station would carry a story about projects and winners.

If students decide to create a new awards program, they should get sample applications from existing award programs. These will provide ideas for planning. Students should think and plan carefully for fairness. There are many kinds of actions and achievements the award program could recognize. Get students and adults outside the group to review award plans and make suggestions.

Resources for Project Recognition

Keep America Beautiful.

<<http://www.kab.org/awards1.cfm>>. *Since 1953, the Keep America Beautiful National Awards Program has recognized outstanding organizations and people who by their actions instill a sense of individual responsibility in others for the care and well-being of their communities. This group encourages positive action and fosters public-private partnerships to prevent litter, beautify and improve communities, and promote waste minimization.*

The President's Environmental Youth Awards. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. <<http://www.epa.gov/enviroed/awards.html>>. Established in 1971, this program recognizes young people across America for projects that demonstrate their commitment to the environment.

River of Words. River of Words Project. <<http://www.deq.state.va.us/education/rowwinners.html>>. ROW is an environmental art and poetry contest for children in grades K–12. The Virginia ROW contest is a branch of the International River of Words program founded by former Poet Laureate Robert Hass.

Virginia Environmental Stewardship Awards. Virginia Petroleum Council. <<http://www.deq.state.va.us/info/vpcaward.html>>. Virginia Environmental Stewardship Awards are sponsored by Virginia's Secretary of Natural Resources (<http://www.naturalresources.virginia.gov/>) and the Virginia Petroleum Council. Nominations are encouraged that exemplify innovative and effective stewardship activities that serve to protect and enhance local and state natural resources. Qualifications for nominees are intentionally broad in scope. The awards are open to any individual, class, school, public/private partnership, environmental group, or community group that has undertaken a single project or for activities over a period of time.

Virginia Naturally School Recognition Award Program. Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. <http://www.dgif.state.va.us/education/Van_school_recognition.html>. Virginia Naturally Exemplary Schools is the official environmental education school recognition program of the commonwealth, administered by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Its purpose is to recognize those exemplary efforts undertaken by Virginia schools to increase the environmental awareness and stewardship of its students. This is not a one-time award but one upon which you may build and achieve additional recognitions each year you participate.